

**Statement of Senator Larry Craig**  
**Senate Special Committee on Aging**  
**“Assistive Technologies for Independent Aging: Opportunities and Challenges”**  
April 27, 2004

Good morning and welcome. We are here this morning to get a glimpse of a better future for America's seniors.

I am speaking of the potential of assistive technology. Advances in such technology have the potential to revolutionize how seniors and their families experience the aging process – most importantly by improving seniors' quality of life and making it possible to remain independent in the comfort of their own homes and communities.

And this comes not a moment too soon. Worldwide, the number of people over the age of 60 will nearly double over the next several decades, and of course, here at home, the 77 million-strong Baby Boomer generation will begin retiring only a few short years from today.

For seniors and their families, assistive technology offers hope. For America's technology industry, it offers an exciting and expanding market. And for policymakers, it offers real potential to free up scarce resources – resources urgently needed as America ages.

This morning, we will see first-hand demonstrations of some of the cutting edge assistive technologies being developed by America's technology companies and universities.

Importantly, however, we will also be talking about the very real challenges we face in bringing these technologies out of the lab and into the marketplace -- and from there into seniors' homes.

For example, some of the witnesses here today will testify that America's technology sector has not yet fully embraced the potential market for such technology.

Others will speak about the challenge of translating new technologies into products that are both affordable and practical. Even the most brilliant technology can fall short if it is too expensive or too complex for an average senior to use.

Through the leadership of organizations like the Center for Aging Services Technologies (otherwise known as CAST), these challenges are beginning to get the attention they deserve.

Our purpose here today is to highlight both the dazzling opportunities and the real challenges that lie ahead as we seek to bring life-enhancing assistive technologies to America's seniors. We appreciate our witnesses for their contribution. Thank you.

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